MARVEL
PG 48 146

JENKINS

BUCKINGHAM

FAUCHER

PETER PARKER™ SPIDER-MAN®

BUCKY
+WAYNE
delgado

Me and God, we have this little game.

We're still working out the finer details, but it basically works like this: He does something really spiteful... normally to someone I care about... and I get to ask a lot of questions about it.

Prayers are, like, God's way of staying interested. I swear he does this stuff to us so that we'll complain and he can have someone to talk to.

Dear God, the thing is this: my life's a joke.

I mean... if you're so infinitely wise then why would you send someone like the Green Goblin to try and ruin my life? Since when did my family and friends ever do you any harm?

Why would you have the Goblin put my buddy Flash Thompson in a coma so that he may never walk or talk again?

And where did I go so wrong that you needed to hold a mirror to my heart, just so's I can see my ugly reflection?

"OH, PETER... DON'T YOU SEE? THIS IS ALL PART OF MY GRAND DESIGN."

Uh-huh... is this one of those "create by numbers" things you got going here? Only I'm not sure I see the entire picture...

"WOULD IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE IF YOU DID?"

Probably not. So just why do bad things happen to good people?

"I CAN'T TELL YOU. IT'D SPOIL THE SURPRISE. YOU'D KNOW EVERYTHING, AND THEN YOU'D GET ALL BORED AND GRUMPY AND YOU'D BLAME IT ON ME."

"IT'S MUCH BETTER THIS WAY, PETER... YOU GET TO FIGURE EVERYTHING OUT FOR YOURSELF AND WHEN YOU DO, IT'LL MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD."

The Big Question

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BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP

What happened...?

Down in the vault, some idiot tripped the alarms!

What in Sam Hill is going on down here, Bobby? Did you set the motion detectors properly?

It's gotta be a glitch, Mister Corman. There ain't no way anyone could get in there... it's sealed tighter than my grandpa's wallet.

We're supposed to be monitoring the screens twenty four-seven. In case you and the boys didn't realize, we got over nine billion dollars in untraceable assets in here.

I don't care if it's a glitch or a ghost... I want to know why these alarms went off and I want to know now!

=Huff= ...out of my way! Hurry!

Corman, you told me yourself that this vault is virtually impenetrable. What's going on?

In here, Mister Kirkland-- you'd better come see this for yourself.

My time is too valuable to come leaping downstairs every time someone accidentally trips the system. There'd better be a good reason for this...

I can give you about fifty million of them, sir.

STAR OF PERSIA

Mister Corman... look! Up there!

A friend in need is a friend indeed.

Unless they're my friends.

My friends end up on life support. They get busted up by maniacs in leotards, just for the pleasure of knowing me.

The really close ones get thrown off of bridges.

So, I guess Miami's probably going to repeat, huh, Flash? They're gonna get to keep their entire offensive line.

Anything but the Gators, huh? Yeah... I thought so too.

GET WELL SOON!

GET WELL

SPORTS MAGAZINE

Good old Liz: she's been a real saint. She's as busy as all get-out, and yet she's here with Flash every time I come by. A man could wait a thousand years and never meet a friend so loyal.

I'm guessing she knows this wasn't Flash's fault-- he just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

One minute, he's minding his own business and next thing you know, he's at the wheel of a truck crashing into a wall at ninety miles an hour.

And me... I might as well have been the one holding the wheel.

HOSPITAL

This is all because of me: All because of my stubborn, stupid insistence that I can put on a goofy spandex suit and somehow make a difference.

Well, I sure made a big difference to Flash, didn't I?

Thanks to me, my friend is now clinging to life, victim of a hit-and-run associate named Peter Parker.

"Hey, Flash... long time, no see. It's too bad you were trying so hard to make something of your life...

"...and then I came along and ruined it."

This is weird. My spider senses are chattering like monkeys on a hot plate, but I don't get a sense of danger... not immediate danger, anyway.

It's almost... a sense of melancholy. As if someone's laughing, but I'm too far away to hear the joke.

I feel like I've tapped in to someone's phone conversation, or something. It's as if some strange force has invaded my senses from incredibly far away.

It's like nothing I've ever felt before...

AAH!

Oh, God... what the heck was that...

uhh... =ah-hehh=...

Can't breathe... it's as if my very intuition is under attack.

I hear a sound, laughter. Like tinkling bells across the snow.

White snow falling through dead air.

Becoming a blanket of flower petals, covering the grime of the city.

My senses are screaming at me...

...and that distant laughter now whispers my name.

Didn't I tell you something like this was going to happen?

In twenty five minutes I'm supposed to go in and explain to the Board exactly how the Star of Persia went missing in broad daylight, right under our very noses.

They're going to ask me about the question mark symbol we found on the scarf, and they're going to connect it to what happened in Bangladesh.

What are we supposed to say about that? We don't even know what the question means...

It's not a question.

It's a statement.

What Mister Kirkland is trying to say is that if word of this incident gets out, people are going to start asking some very tough questions.

Not just about the diamond... that should be pretty clear to everyone in this room... but also about our involvement in the Bangladesh affair.

Gentlemen, we're in some very deep water here. If the scarf is intended to be a message, someone knows a lot more than he should. God help us, if that's the case.

We could simply create a fake diamond. If it's discovered, we deny everything...

Since you're so full of ideas, Harry, you mind telling the rest of us just what you'd say when they ask when the switch occurred?

Okay... So we can't place the blame elsewhere. What do we do, then?

We do what we've done all along:

Nothing.

Two hours later and I still can't shake it.

I'm supposed to be moping around, or something. I'm supposed to be marking my students' papers. But all I can do is stand and stare.

My spider senses are going crazy... but not because I'm registering danger. There's something else going on here.

Something very weird.

DOG

Uh, yeah... hi, Caryn? It's Peter from across the way.

Hey, listen, I was just looking over towards your balcony and I was wondering...

What? Peter, is that you? I can't hear you over the music.

Listen, I can't talk right now-- Barker has some friends by. I'll call you later, okay, sweetie? Bye.

CLICK

Sir, they're moving outside the city border--

AHHHHH!!

Open fire!

BLAM!

BLAM!

No! No!

Those people... get them in the truck! Don't argue, just do it!

Please... have mercy--

BANG

Peter, it's me... it's Liz Osborn. If you're there, I need you to pick up.

I've been down at the hospital visiting Flash. I just spoke to his doctor.

Listen, Pete... it's not good news, I'm afraid.

They've been running some tests... some brain scans, or something. Flash is going to be okay... at least, his bones an' ligaments an' stuff... but there's a problem.

His doctor says there are some major scars where Flash's brain smashed into the skull during the crash. They're not sure what it means yet, but the doctor seemed pretty alarmed.

He says there's going to be bruising on his spinal cord, and... and...

Oh, Pete... they can't pick up anything on the nerve induction test. His brain's not responding, no matter what they try.

What are we going to do...?

I can't get involved, Uncle Ben.

I can't.

Look where "getting involved" has gotten me so far: Flash is going to be a vegetable because of me.

You remember him, don't you? Captain of the football team, great big happy grin, Mister All-American?

His life's in a big, dark hole... and all I can do is stand around feeling detached and thinking about what happened in the city today...

What are you looking at, dog-breath?

Someone's here-- I can feel it... her! A woman-- don't ask me how, I just know.

She must have laid out those flowers to draw my interest and then followed me here. Unless... unless she knew where I was all along.

Can't worry about being careful, there's too much on the line. I'd better hope none of my neighbors are out moon-bathing...

ROOF EXIT

WHAM

Hey!

Okay, this is weird. Uh... thanks for the flowers, I guess. I mean, I'm flattered.

Flattered and freaked out. Do I know you from somewhere, or is this a kind of super-hero/stalker thing?

Nutty as a fruitcake, huh? I don't think we've been formally introduced. Are you related to the Brooklyn fruitcakes?

Hey, slow down!

She's quick. I'm going as fast as I can and I'm barely making a dent.

All I see is a blur. All I hear is a sound, tragic laughter on the wind. Like tinkling bells.

And all I can think is, there's no way she could've gotten that far ahead. It's not physically possible.

Not unless she's a mutant.

Oh, huh... =hehh= ...gee, thanks for waiting.

Okay, I don't suppose you're going to tell me what this is about? I mean, as much as I've enjoyed chasing your tail...

Yeah, I didn't think so.

So, what does a guy have to do to get a straight answer around here?

The question is the answer.

Red and yellow is everything.

?

Red and yellow, huh? And this is for me?

You really shouldn't have...

BOSH

OW!

I hear a sound like tinkling bells...

...no, scratch that... it's a sound like a herd of elephants on motorcycles. Oh yeah... that's it... my head.

Totally unexpected, that's her M.O. She caught me before I had a chance to react.

My senses don't seem to work around her-- that's one of her many abilities, apparently.

Everything means something, and nothing is quite as it seems. As soon as I touch her scarf, I hear a sound welling up from within.

It's a message:

"Look behind you!"

inc
Dear God...
To be continued...